

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EUR-12 IO-13 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04
H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01
SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 ACDA-07 AID-05 OMB-01 TRSE-00
HEW-04 CU-02 EB-07 COME-00 DHA-02 /109 W
-----091420Z 001308 /41

R 091314Z JUN 77
FM AMEMBASSY ANTANANARIVO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9325

CONFIDENTIAL SECTION 1 OF 2 ANTANANARIVO 1084

E.O. 11652:GDS
TAGS: PFOR, MA
SUBJECT: PRESENT SITUATION IN THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF MADAGASCAR
(DRM): JUGGERNAUT AND JITTERS

1. SUMMARY. ALTHOUGH PRESIDENT RATSIRAKA'S PARTY AREMA KEEPS ROLLING UP MASSIVE MAJORITIES IN LOCAL ELECTIONS AND WILL PROBABLY DO SO AGAIN IN THE LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS ON JUNE 30, THE PRESENT REGIME HAS NOT ATTAINED THE POPULAR ACCEPTANCE THAT THE FIGURES WOULD INDICATE AND THERE IS A GREAT DEAL OF RESENTMENT, DISSATISFACTION, AND INSECURITY AS A RESULT. THERE ARE EVEN RUMORS OF PLOTTING AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT AND OF GOVERNMENT PREEMPTIVE ACTION IN THE FORM OF SURVEILLANCE, HOUSE ARRESTS, AND IMPRISONMENT OF SUSPECTED "COUP PLOTTERS." ALTHOUGH SOME EXAMPLES ARE CITED BELOW, FEW OF THESE ELEMENTS OF INSTABILITY AND PUBLIC APPREHENSION CAN BE CONFIRMED OR QUANTIFIED, AND IN FACT THIS MAY WELL BE A CHRONIC CONDITION IN PRESENT-DAY MADAGASCAR, ESPECIALLY SINCE EARLY 1972 WHEN THE COUNTRY WENT INTO A FOUR-YEAR-LONG PERIOD OF TRANSITIONAL AD HOC GOVERNMENT. IT IS THE CONTRAST BETWEEN THE SURFACE IMPRESSION OF NEAR-UNANIMITY PRODUCED BY AREMA'S ELECTORAL JUGGERNAUT AND THE STATE OF EVIDENT PUBLIC JITTERS WHICH IS STRIKING AT THE PRESENT TIME. END SUMMARY.

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2. ITEM: DECENTRALIZATION OF THE UNIVERSITY. IT IS PLANNED TO RELOCATE THE VARIOUS FACULTIES OF THE UNIVERSITY IN DIFFERENT PARTS OF THE COUNTRY. THIS WILL MEAN THAT A STUDENT'S CHOICE OF SPECIALIZATION WILL DETERMINE WHERE HE GOES TO SCHOOL OR VICE VERSA, AND THAT ONLY A FEW CAN LOOK FORWARD TO SPENDING THEIR STUDENT DAYS IN THE CAPITAL. THIS IS NOT SITTING WELL WITH PARTS OF THE

VOLATILE STUDENT POPULATION, NOR WITH MANY OF THE TEACHERS WHO WILL HAVE TO MOVE.

3. ITEM: RUMORS OF COUPS AND DRM PREEMPTIVE ACTION. IT IS FREELY BANDIED ABOUT THAT THE SECOND ANNIVERSARY OF RATSIKAKA'S COMING TO POWER MAY PRODUCE SOME DRAMA EITHER IN THE FORM OF GOVERNMENT ACTION SUCH AS THE NASA TAKEOVER IN 1975 AND THE OIL COMPANY NATIONALIZATIONS OF 1976, OR ANTI-GOVERNMENT ACTION SUCH AS A COUP. RUMORS ABOUND OF PLOTTING AND GOVERNMENT PREEMPTIVE ACTION. DAO IS PREPARING A REPORT GIVING FURTHER SPECIFICS. THERE IS ALSO DISCONTENT WITHIN THE TRADITIONALLY FRAGMENTED AND RECENTLY REORGANIZED MILITARY SERVICES.

4. ITEM: MONIMA DISAFFECTION. THE MONIMA PARTY, BASED IN THE SOUTH, HAS JUST ABOUT OPTED OUT OF THE ELECTION PROCESS AND BECOME A DISLOYAL OPPOSITION, EVEN THOUGH REMAINING WITHIN THE NATIONAL FRONT (ANT 0535). A RUMORED ANTI-AREMA SPEECH MADE BY MONIMA LEADER MONJA JAONA ON APRIL 2 WAS KEPT OUT OF THE PRESS.

A COPY OF THE SPEECH RECENTLY OBTAINED BY THE EMBASSY REVEALS THE BITTERNESS OF THE MONIMA PARTY, WHICH WAS INSTRUMENTAL IN OVERTHROWING FORMER PRESIDENT TSIRANANA IN 1972 AND THUS STARTING THE PROCESS WHICH LED UP TO THE PRESENT SITUATION, AT BEING STEAMROLLED BY THE AREMA ELECTORAL MACHINERY, LED AND DIRECTED BY LOCAL OFFICIALS, WITH FREQUENT FLAGRANT ABUSES OF POWER AND DUE PROCESS. IT IS REPORTED THAT SOME MONIMA STRONGHOLDS IN THE SOUTH ARE VIRTUALLY IN A STATE OF SIEGE.

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5. ITEM: GENERAL INSECURITY. MADAGASCAR HAS APPARENTLY NEVER BEEN KNOWN FOR LAW AND ORDER. BUT IN ADDITION TO THE NORMAL PETTY CRIME IN TOWN AND CITY THERE IS NOW SAID TO BE POLITICALLY-MOTIVATED INSECURITY. THE GOVERNMENT ITSELF HAS ACCUSED POLITICAL ENEMIES OF FOMENTING THE MASSACRE OF COMORIANS IN MAJUNGA LAST DECEMBER TO DISCREDIT THE REGIME. OTHERS ARE SAID TO BE ENCOURAGING PETTY VANDALISM IN THE CAPITAL FOR THE SAME PURPOSE. WE HAVE RELIABLE STORIES OF THE KIDNAPPING OF CHILDREN OF PROMINENT FAMILIES HERE FOR NO EVIDENT PURPOSE. THE VICTIMS ARE RETURNED AFTER SEVERAL DAYS WITH NO DEMANDS MADE.

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EUR-12 IO-13 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04

H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01

SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 ACDA-07 AID-05 OMB-01 TRSE-00

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FM AMEMBASSY ANTANANARIVO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9326

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 ANTANANARIVO 1084

6. ITEM: CORRUPTION, CYNICISM, AND SLOTH: RUMORS OF CORRUPTION IN THE PRESENT LEADERSHIP ARE WIDESPREAD. SOME OF THEM CONCERN THE PRESIDENT. REPORTED PROFITEERING BY HIS RELATIVES IS WIDELY CRITICIZED IN THE CAPITAL, AND HIS DOUR AND UNSMILING APPEARANCE AND MODISH DRESS, BY CARDIN IT IS SAID, DO LITTLE TO ATTRACT POPULAR ENTHUSIASM FOR HIS PERSON. THERE IS A GREAT DEAL OF CYNICISM REGARDING THE ELECTION RESULTS. IT IS NOTED THAT AREMA IS GETTING THE SAME PROPORTION OF VOTES AS THE OLD RULING SOCIALIST PARTY, WHICH IS NOW OUTLAWED. THE CONCLUSION IS THAT THE AREMA'S ELECTORATE IS THEREFORE COMPOSED OF THE SAME PEOPLE WHO SUPPORTED THE PREVIOUS REGIME, VOTING FOR THE GOVERNMENT IN POWER, WHATEVER ITS NATURE, AS AN ACT OF OBEDIENCE OR OPPORTUNISM, AIDED AND ABETTED BY GOVERNMENT PRESSURE. MEANWHILE, THE ROADS REMAIN UNREPAIRED, GARBAGE COLLECTION IS FITFUL AND RICE IS SHORT. THE ECONOMY IS STAGNANT WITH THE PRIVATE SECTOR DISCOURAGED AND THE GOVERNMENT NOT YET HAVING TAKEN UP THE SLACK. AREMA'S EFFICIENCY APPARENTLY ONLY APPLIES TO GETTING OUT THE VOTE.

7. COMMENT AND CONCLUSION: THIS GENERAL IMPRESSION OF THE PRESENT SITUATION IN THE DRM IS INTENDED TO SERVE AS A FRAMEWORK FOR FURTHER REPORTS. WE HOPE TO BE ABLE TO FILL IN BLANKS AND ADD SPECIFICS AS THE SITUATION DEVELOPS.

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WE WILL ALSO AMEND THIS ESTIMATE AS CONDITIONS WARRANT. BUT AS OF NOW THE MAIN CONCLUSION MUST BE THAT PRESIDENT RATSIKAKA'S REGIME HAS A LONG WAY TO GO, AND MUST PRODUCE RESULTS BEYOND THE ELECTORAL FIELD, TO BECOME TRULY ACCEPTED AS THE ESTABLISHED AND LEGITIMATE GOVERNMENT AND TO ENJOY GENUINE POPULAR SUPPORT.

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Message Attributes

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Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
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